



## An Article by Chick Gibson that was never published during his lifetime

Some thoughts, on Bikes that I have ridden, inside and outside Ireland and certain "happenings" on the way.

I suppose that I should start at the beginning ~ it seems easier to recall the very early times than the more recent ~ meaning the last 20 years!

While still at school, I encouraged a friend Jack Gibney to give me a ride on his 1914 Douglas twin, belt drive in the lane behind the family home on Belgrave Road, His instructions were ~ "run it fast, put the quadrant lever into - low - open the throttle lever and jump into the saddle" but I must have had a blank - when it fired I was dragged alongside tearing the trousers of a newish suit and my legs along the wall! My Mum did not agree with my "lame" excuses naturally.

When at last at 14 years the motor cycle Licence was available, I had saved every half-penny and shilling (12 pence) and Dad agreed to add £7.00 towards the £32-17-6 for a 196cc Francis Barnett. His friend George Briggs took me to the South side of Merrion Square for a riding lesson, Hand gear changing and Cranking, so after 15 mins. I was away - a motor cycling schoolboy of 15.

Soon the competition bug got into me and the F - B was "tuned" for the 1932 Dublin University Clubs' Mount Venus Hill Climb, mudguards, lights, tool case, silencer were removed (only at the "pits") and with Jack, set out for unofficial practicing at 6am for 2 early sessions.

Although I really did not know what I was doing, I found that the back plate of the flywheel mag, could be rotated by hand while in motion, giving an advanced ignition timing and a few extra revs. This worked to such good effect that having won the 350cc Handicap class by  $2\frac{3}{5}$  seconds, a speed of 29.3 mph, Athole Harrison the famous Official Handicapper/Timekeeper chopped my allowance by  $8\frac{4}{5}$  seconds and in the 500cc Handicap with 24 starters, increased my speed to 32.3mph knocking 3 seconds off the first run and won by 3 seconds from Aubrey Archer (348cc Velocette).

Then, as a member of the Tallaght & District Motor Cycle Club. I won the 1932 Leinster Motor Club's Schoolboys Trial and Novice Class in open Trial, but of course I wanted more power and a real Trials bike with O.H.Valves, so I sold the "Fanny B" and bought a second hand 350cc Levis which was converted to trials specification by removing Llights, knee grips, tool box etc. and fitted knobblies (competition tyres), crankcase shields (home made), throttle leaver the "in" thing those days because Shirley Moran and Shamus Healy used them. The side knobs on the back tyre had to be cut away to clear the back chain.

The steering damper was removed to allow the handlebars to be raised, but my stupid innocence was evident when a massive tank-slapper threw me off, scraping face and arms coming out of Tallaght Village and ending up on the tracks of the Blessington Steam Tram, I sneaked out to the "pictures" that night so the folks at home could not see the bloody face.

The big event for the Levis was the 12 Hour Night Trial in June 1933. The lights were refitted, spares (plugs & chain links) spare inner tube, tyre leavers, and a tyre pump were carried, and a map!

After the Supper Stop Check at Aughrim the dye route was washed away with very heavy rain I lost time marks but I was still within time allowance and relieved but overdid the ear-holing and collected a wall, the only thing I could not bend straight was the handlebars - now like a cows horn, but continued through the night to the finish at 7am at Ballyboden and won second class award.

That event started the attraction of the Wicklow Mountains and long distance Trials. The dawn ride from Roundwood over the Sally Gap was worth it all.

I was lucky that my Mum and Dad were very experienced and keen motorists from their early days. Their wedding was the first all motor attended wedding in Donnybrook in 1911. So when I was nearing car driving age, I learnt from them in Mum's open Tourer Fiat and Dad's Cadillac V8 left hand drive, followed by 2 Lincon 24hp V8s 1924-26 vintage Left Hand Drive.

My Dad, Innis E, was so keen on those monster motor cars that he would drive to Kerry (on business!) to buy, when one of his hacking driver friends gave him the nod. The rich American tourists shipped over the cars to do the Killarney Tour, then left them. But the Taxi men were not keen on the 9 miles to the gallon needed, although at 1 shilling per gall!. So the Dad persuaded his friend Billy Delaney of Pratts to supply and fit a 1000 gallon tank and hand pump in the garage at Balgrave Road, it is still there, but no petrol of course since rationing in 1939.

The Lincons and Gibsons competed in 1933 the Autumn Rally of the Irish motor Racing Club Pop ( Lincoln) winning Class for car registered before 1927, Mam Gibson (Fiat) and Chick (Lincoln) best over 1000cc and the tem prize.

The Earn motor Cycle Co. was owned by Joe Carville, an ex-competitor and a great supporter of motor sport - the Earn Trophy & Carville Cups . His sons Louis and Dennis raced and rode in trials, they were agents for Triumph bikes of Coventry, and I set my eye on a 1935 250cc "Mark 5 Trials, so with Joe's help I became a Trade supported rider at 21. It was a very solid and heavy machine, with duplex frame, cast iron engine, 4 speed gears, but I did not spare it , riding in Sprints at Turvey Ave, Grass Tracks, Scrambles, Trials and the 1937 Scott trial in Yorkshire winning best newcomer and First Class Award. Triumphs "fettled" the 250 for me at the factory, so I crossed on the Mail Boat from Dun Laoghaire on Thursday night/ Friday Morning, Saw the factory, had lunch with the Directors and Designers! Rode North from Coventry into a snowstorm, arrived at Alan Jeffries house in Shipley festooned with icicles - his sister Elsie kept me on the door step to drain, with a bowl of steaming soup. The course was under 18" of snow and Alan was out on re-marking the moors at 6am before the dawn next morning. He also won the

Trial and then came over here in 1938 and won the Patland, Cecil Yeates (Triumph) Aubrey Archer (Ariel) Ernest Lyons (Triumph) were the top Irish competitors. The Bradford lads took us to the local bar with Frank Varne, Bill Wilkinson and Alan Jefferies and that was the start of some great friendships.

The Triumphs in 1938 re-organised - separating the cat factory from the Bike making, started to turn out designs like the Tigers "70", "80", & "90". Helped by my friends at Coventry, Harry Perray, Alan Jefferies and Joe Carvill of the Erne, I was able to acquire a Tiger 80, a fine handling Trials and Scrambles bike, which brought me some Premier Awards and Scramble Wins.

The banning of competition tyres in Trials in 1935, except for 4 open trials in each centre was an unpopular ruling and in protest the D&D withdrew the Club Trams in the Inter Club Championship, saying the extra cost of two sets of tyres was undue. But soon the Dunlop 4" rear & 2.75" Front Trials were in use, and the new Avon Gripster & comp covers were sold to the Grass Track & Scramble riders.

I got a new Tiger "80" in early 1939 and continued to enjoy the Sport with some fair success, not knowing of course that within 12 months we would be in the Emergency and petrol rationing.

*(This article was given to me in Chick's handwriting and some of the script was difficult to decipher.)*

*John Barkley*



Chick at the start of the Terenure Trial 1932



Chick at D&D Veteran Run 2004